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Tips for Safe Travel

¹Safety and security are important factors to consider while traveling. There are several issues to prepare employees for business travel. Preventive measures can protect employees from being injured or killed as a result of an accident or crime.

- **Lap Tops**

It is not recommended to use your laptop in public places. Thieves are looking for valuables that are easy to walk off with. (Not to mention confidential information that can be destructive to your agency). Imagine the damage hackers can do to agency records.

- **Driving Dangers**

*A report issued by the National Center on Sleep Disorders Research in cooperation with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration found that tired employees contribute to about 1,500 deaths and 40,000 injuries each year from car collisions. Researchers

have found that sleep deprivation can produce impairments in awareness and motor performance equal to legally determined levels of alcohol intoxication. Drowsy employees are driving drunk, without a drop of alcohol in their blood-stream.

*Bo Hardy, technical sales specialist for Southwestern Bell in North Little Rock, Ark., author of *Defensive Living*, and one of the nation's leading experts on personal security, suggested the following vehicle safety tip. "Rent vehicles from companies that do not affix rental stickers to their vehicles, which tip off offenders that you are probably from out of town," Hardy states.

- **Fire Safety**

According to Karen Silva, professor of hospitality management at Johnson & Whales University in Providence, R.I., the threat of a fire in hotels and motels is not a common occurrence but there are tips to follow to avoid the threat.

*Silva suggests, "whenever possible, ask for a room on the lower floors, so you can evacuate quickly via stairs if there is a fire alarm."

* Herbert Nagel, Midwest area director, safety and security, for Hilton Hotels Corp. in Chicago, suggests, that travelers familiarize themselves with fire exits and walk them so that you know exactly where you are going if you need them. If a fire breaks out and your room is smoky, open a window. Nagel emphasizes, "If the door knob is hot do not open the door. Place a wet towel under the door to keep smoke out. Then hang bed sheets out the window to alert rescue personnel to your location."

- **Hotel/Personal**

Safety "Be aware of your surroundings at all times," emphasizes Nagel. "Offenders look for people who are self-absorbed." Stay in motels with a commitment to security. Hardy states, "the more entrances and exists a place has, the easier it is for

¹ *Risk & Insurance*, "Safe Travels" by William Atkinson. April 1, 2001.

intruders to get in and out without being noticed.”

Nagel offers the following tips to protect you from theft.

- *Carry no more than one or two credit cards with you and no more than one or two personal checks.

- *Make sure your driver’s license doesn’t have your Social Security Number on it. (You can suffer from identity theft.)

- *When carrying valuables in a briefcase or purse, make sure it is physically strapped to your arm or leg when you are sitting or standing. “A lot of people put these items between their legs or over the back of chairs, only to have them stolen when they aren’t paying attention for a moment,” states Nagel.

- *Keep your wallet in your front pocket.

- *If you are the victim of a theft, report it to the police immediately and ask for the report number. The report number will be helpful to you when reporting the theft to credit card companies and banks.

- **Especially For Women**

- *While lower floors are useful in the event of a fire, Silva has found that most professional women travelers, for security purposes, prefer upper floors, as well as rooms far away from the elevators

and stairwells as possible.

“These rooms make it difficult for offenders to get in and out quickly,” she explains.

- *“Never allow the desk clerk to say your room number out loud when you are checking in,” Silva continues. “Most clerks have been trained not to do so, but if you encounter one who does say your room number out loud, ask for a different room.”

- *When you enter your room lock your door immediately, but do not chain the door until you have checked your room to make sure no one is hiding.

- *If you are accosted in public yell ‘fire’ to draw attention to yourself.

- *If you are attacked run into the street. You run a risk of being hit by a vehicle, but the odds are better than staying with your attacker.

- *Carry pepper spray if it is legal in the state where you are traveling.

- **Traveling Abroad**

Nagel recommends visiting the U.S. Embassy or Department of State in the country where you are traveling. “Make a copy of your passport and leave it with them,” he suggests. “Tell them where you are going, ask if there will be any problems there, and for the safest routes. If there are problems there, of

course, it’s probably not wise to even go.”